

25. ON THE IDENTITY OF *OPHIORRHIZA SESHAGIRIANA*
SIKDAR ET MAITI (RUBIACEAE)

The taxonomy of the genus *Ophiorrhiza* L. (Rubiaceae) in the Indian subcontinent has been under investigation by us for the last four years. Our attention was drawn to the recent publication of *O. seshagiriana* Sikdar et Maiti in J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 78(1):143, 1981. The new species was collected from Jalpaiguri District in May 1976 and described on the basis of a single gathering *J. K. Sikdar* 4681A-E. We distinguished this species from *O. heterophylla* Dunn in Kew Bull. 1920 (4): 133, 1920, collected in December-March 1911-1912, from Kameng District (Abor Hill), Arunachal Pradesh *I. H. Burkill* 36116, 36616, 37334, 38158, 38171 in consideration of erect habit, cymes with short raceme like branches, shorter pedicel, triangular-ovate glabrous calyx lobes, cylindrical non bulbous corolla tube and shorter anther lobes. They further observed that the species is clearly recognizable by the presence of reflexed corolla lobes at blooming as seen in *O. heterophylla* where heterostyly is of common occurrence, while in this taxon this is not visible.

We rightly compared the material with *O. heterostyla* having reflexed corolla lobes. But the differences observed are not tenable as they resulted from superficial study and misinterpretation of morphological characters. It is evident from the specimens that the plant is not erect. Inflorescence is in dichotomous or trichotomous panicle of cymes, sometimes helicoid above. Pedicel varies from 1.25 to 3.5 mm in *O. heterostyla*. In *O. seshagiriana* the pedicels are generally shorter, but in *Sikdar* 4681D it is 2.25 mm long. Shorter pedicels

and triangular-ovate glabrous calyx lobes are present in type material of *O. heterostyla*. Anther lobes are of the same size in both the species. Corolla tube is not generally distinctly bulbous at base in *O. seshagiriana*, but it shows a bulbous tendency or is slightly bulbous sometimes as in *Sikdar* 4681A. We failed to observe heterostyly in *O. seshagiriana* even though it is evident in the presence of short styled flower in *Sikdar* 4681B along with long styled ones. In view of all these variations observed on detailed scrutiny of the type specimens it is evident that *O. seshagiriana* does not differ specifically from *O. heterostyla* and it is reduced to synonymy as follows.

O. heterostyla Dunn in Kew Bull. 1920 (4): 133, 1920 (Syntype: Arunachal, Kameng District (Abor Hill), *Burkill* 36116! CAL, 37334! CAL, 38158! CAL, K).

Syn. *O. seshagiriana* Sikdar et Maiti in J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 78(1):142, 1981 (Type: West Bengal, Jalpaiguri District, Buxaduar, 1800 m (?), *J. K. Sikdar* 4681A Holotype: B-E Isotype! all in (CAL) SYNON. NOV.

This, however, extends the range of distribution of *O. heterostyla* from Kameng District (Arunachal) to Jalpaiguri District (West Bengal), 540 m-1020 m. This is also collected from Kachin State, Burma at a higher altitude 1500-2100 m as extent in herb. K.

Flowering time: December-May.

Distribution: North Bengal (Jalpaiguri) to Burma (Kachin State).

Probably this occurs all over the sub-Himalayan Ranges from Nepal to Burma at 540-2100 m.

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D. B. DEB
D. C. MONDAL